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**Civil Rights Commission to Host Southeast Michigan
Public Forum on Racial Disparities in Health**

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission will host a public forum on Michigan health care disparities on Monday, December 15, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Wayne State University Law School, 471 West Palmer Street, Detroit, MI.

The forum will provide an opportunity for members of the Commission and the general public to learn about racial disparities that exist in Michigan's health care system. Nationally, minorities are more likely to be without health care insurance and consequently suffer from serious health care conditions. This statistic holds true for Michigan as well. The Michigan Department of Community Health reports that African American male deaths occur two times more often than White male deaths and the rate of HIV infection among African Americans is more than eight times higher than the rate among Whites in Michigan.

"Our department is focused on eliminating inequities of every kind in Michigan, however the health care sector is so important because every human being deserves the right to an optimal quality of life," Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Linda V. Parker said.

The Commission will hear testimony from both invited experts and the general public. Topics may include unequal access to health care services, barriers formed by cultural miscommunication and the effects of segregation and economic factors on health.

Confirmed guest speakers include: Dr. Herbert C. Smitherman Jr., Assistant Dean of Community and Urban Health, and Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine at Karmanos Cancer Institute, Wayne State University School of Medicine; Dr. Othelia Pryor, Executive Director of the Michigan Minority Health Coalition; Jacquetta Hinton, Program Coordinator for the Michigan Department of Community Health's Health Disparities Reduction/Minority Health project; Vernellia Randall, Professor of Law at the University of Dayton and Phyllis Meadows, Director of the City of Detroit's Department of Health and Wellness Promotion.

The general public is encouraged to attend.

For more information on the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, visit
<http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr>.

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